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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: UAE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES,  
IRAQ, AFGHANISTAN AND LEBANON IN 2006

REF: A. 04 ABU DHABI 4218  
[1](#)B. 05 ABU DHABI 3266

[1](#)1. (U) BEGIN SUMMARY: The UAE provides humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians, Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon primarily through its three quasi-governmental charities: the UAE Red Crescent Society (RCS), the Sheikh Zayed Foundation (ZF), and the Dubai-based Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity Foundation (MRCF). On December 10, Econoffs met with Red Crescent officials to discuss their humanitarian projects in the Middle East. Although there are no official figures of UAE humanitarian assistance available, post has consolidated information from press reports and UAE Red Crescent data for a better picture of UAE humanitarian assistance in 2006. UAE charitable organizations provided 14.32 million USD in assistance to the Palestinian territories in 2006. In addition, the UAE agreed to provide 100 million USD to build Sheikh Khalifa City in Gaza. In 2006, the UAE Red Crescent donated 3.9 million USD to Iraq, 8 million USD to Afghanistan and 25.89 million USD to Lebanon as well as food, medicine and other relief supplies. In addition, the UAEG pledged 20 million USD to the U.N. Program for the Relief of Lebanon. This cable focuses on quasi-governmental and non governmental humanitarian aid, not official economic development assistance or security/military assistance. END SUMMARY.

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PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES  
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[1](#)2. (SBU) During a December 10 meeting with Econoffs, Dr. Saleh Al Taie, UAE Red Crescent Relief and Emergency Department Manager and Saleh Mohammed Al Mullah, Director General of the Relief and Emergency Department, discussed the Red Crescent's humanitarian assistance to Palestine. The Red Crescent officials explained that all assistance is done through official channels, in coordination with the Palestinian Authority, the Israeli government, UNRWA, UNICEF, and the International Red Cross. Red Crescent officials said they work with two affiliate offices in the Palestinian territories, one in Gaza and the other in Jerusalem.

[1](#)3. (U) In 2006, the UAE Red Crescent Society (RCS) provided approximately 4.3 million USD in assistance to the Palestinian territories in the form of medicine and other relief supplies. In October, RCS, in collaboration with the Palestinian Forum for Development, oversaw a one million USD charity campaign sponsored by the UAE President to support orphans and the disabled and unemployed in the Palestinian territories. The RCS allocated another one million USD for "Iftars" (breakfast meals during the holy month of

Ramadan, September/October). The RCS distributed about 200,000 meals to Palestinians under this project. On December 13, the RCS signed agreements with the UN to fund two construction projects in Gaza and the West Bank. The RCS pledged 2.17 million USD for the rebuilding of houses in Gaza and 3.5 million USD for the rebuilding of homes in the West Bank.

¶4. (U) In 2006, the Sheikh Zayed Foundation (ZF) pledged 5.9 million USD for health and social projects in coordination with the National Palestinian Authority and UNRWA. In addition, the Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity Foundation (MRCF) announced a 2.72 million USD fund to provide urgent drugs for treatment of kidney disease, cancer and diabetes at Palestinian hospitals. The Emirates Charitable Work Authority financed a 400,000 USD factory for artificial limbs in the West Bank.

¶5. (U) In March 2006, the UAE Department of Municipalities and Agriculture and representatives from the Palestinian Authority signed a Memorandum of Understanding to establish a 100 million USD housing complex (Sheikh Khalifa City) in Rafah, Gaza. Sheikh Khalifa City's foundation stone was laid on October 5, 2005 by UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan in a ceremony attended by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The development will include housing units, schools, health centers and other facilities. It will accommodate 30,000-40,000 displaced Palestinians

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IRAQ  
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¶6. (SBU) On December 10, RCS officials told Econoff that the RCS provided 38.9 million USD in assistance to Iraq from 2002-2006. RCS officials also said that at the beginning of 2006, the RCS launched

ABU DHABI 00004474 002 OF 003

a relief program spending 1.7 million USD to support Iraqis who faced severe weather conditions. Over 4,050 food parcels, mineral water and blankets were distributed by the RCS in collaboration with the UAE Embassy in Baghdad (which subsequently ceased active coordination in the summer of 2006 due to the security situation in Iraq) to 10,000 displaced people and 7,000 orphans in Baghdad, Basra, and Kurdistan. Assistance was also provided to the families of "martyrs" and wounded in Al Sadr city. During Ramadan, the RCS launched a 2.2 million USD "Iftar" project in Iraq to provide free meals.

¶7. (SBU) According to media reports, and confirmed in a December 10 meeting with Red Crescent authorities, the UAE has also provided medical treatment and rehabilitation for hundreds of Iraqi children.

Children suffering from chronic disease and those socially, psychologically or physically affected by the on-going violence received treatment in the UAE. Red Crescent officials told Econoff that the UAE Red Crescent's office in Iraq has distributed what officials describe as "a huge quantity of medicines and medical necessities to Iraqi hospitals."

¶8. (SBU) During the aforementioned December 10 meeting, officials from the RCS also told Econoff that they do not have any more funds available for assistance to Iraq, but said they are ready to begin fund raising campaigns if the UAEG tells them to do so. RCS officials said that they closed their offices in Iraq after the kidnapping of UAE diplomat Naji Al Noaimi this past summer.

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AFGHANISTAN  
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¶9. (U) Local UAE newspapers reported that 70 percent of Sheikh Zayed City in Kabul, which cost 4 million USD, has been completed this year. The city includes 200 residential units, a mosque, two schools and a medical clinic. In addition, more than 1,000 wells were drilled in Kabul and Jalalabad in 2006. The RCS continued to send assistance to Afghanistan, including food parcels, flour, cooking oil, Iftar meals, clothes and school bags. The RCS's office in Kabul has provided humanitarian assistance to 571 orphans sponsored by the RCS in Afghanistan.

¶10. (U) The Sheikh Zayed Foundation (ZF) has agreed to build a 4 million USD maternity and pediatric clinic in Afghanistan.

¶11. (U) According to press reports, during the visit of Afghan President Hamed Karzai to the UAE last May, Karzai met with the Governor of the UAE Central Bank, Sultan bin Nasser Al Suwaidi, who emphasized enhancing the ongoing cooperation between the UAE Central Bank and the Central Bank of Afghanistan, particularly in training. UAE Education Minister, Dr. Hanif Hassan, also expressed the UAE's commitment to help Afghanistan rebuild its educational infrastructure.

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LEBANON  
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¶12. (SBU) RCS officials told Econoff that the bulk of UAE humanitarian assistance to Lebanon was due to the war between Hizballah and Israel in July, 2006. The UAE sent relief supplies, through a quickly-arranged "air bridge" with daily flights carrying aid to Beirut, reconstructed schools and hospitals, and built shelters for displaced Lebanese. The UAEG pledged 20 million USD to the UN Program for the Relief of Lebanon. UAE aid included more than 4,000 tons of relief materials, 20,000 food packages, 112 electricity generators, 25,000 gifts to orphans, 3,000 Iftar meals during Ramadan, as well as medicines, lamps, blankets, milk, vaccines, and tents.

¶13. (U) UAE humanitarian assistance to Lebanon is mainly channeled through the RCS and Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum Charity Foundation (MRCF). In July, the RCS and MRCF in collaboration with the Emirati-Lebanese Friendship Association, Arab Media Group (AMG), and Dubai Media Corporation (DMC) launched an effective "Their Children are Ours" campaign which raised 14.97 million USD in support of Lebanon.

¶14. (SBU) On December 10, RCS Deputy Secretary General for Relief & Emergency, Saleh Al Mulla told Econoff that RCS assistance to

ABU DHABI 00004474 003 OF 003

Lebanon since July 2006 totaled 15.25 million USD. (14.97 million USD of this money was raised in the fundraising campaign and an additional .28 million USD was provided by the RCS for a total donation of 15.25 million USD.) The RCS has also sent 35 planes loaded with thousands of tons of basic relief supplies and a ship carrying 2500 tons of food.

¶15. (U) In August 2006, the MRCF announced its plan for health, education, and reconstruction projects for Lebanon. MRCF's Deputy Chairman of Trustees, Ibrahim bu Melhah, told the press that his foundation had allocated 10.89 million USD for its humanitarian plan in Lebanon.

¶16. (U) MRCF sent 721 tons of relief supplies to Lebanon during the crisis. It also pledged to build 1000 temporary houses in Lebanon for returning refugees and established 18 temporary camps to accommodate displaced people. In addition, MRCF donated 2 million USD to 91 fishermen and 325 boat owners.

¶17. (U) The MRCF also signed an agreement with the Syrian Red Crescent Society to serve daily meals to more than 5,000 displaced Lebanese located in Syria. The agreement also allows the UAE Red Crescent to store 200 tons of relief materials in Syria and to set up 27 shelters and two health centers for Lebanese refugees living in Syria.

¶18. (U) Both the RCS and the MRCF have delivered medicine and ambulances and pledged to build hospitals in Marjayoun, bint Jubeil and Arquop and create a mobile hospital project in southern Lebanon. The UAE Ministry of Health has also dispatched medical relief air-cargoes including electro-cardiographs, portable cardiac resuscitation equipment, 24,000 cans of infant formula and 6500 units of basic foodstuffs.

¶19. (U) The UAE "Emirates Initiative for Support and Reconstruction

of Lebanon (EISRL)" offered to rebuild 216 schools damaged in the war. To date, 191 schools have already been completed. In September 2006, the UAE President offered to pay for the textbooks and school supplies of 400,000 Lebanese students.

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